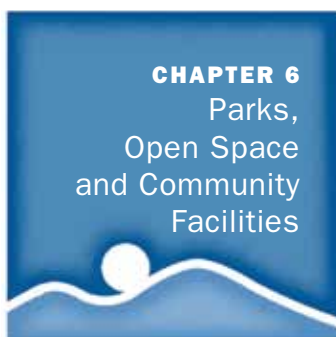


**CHAPTER 6**  
Parks, Open Space and  
Community Facilities

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Parks and open space, community facilities, recreational programs and the arts are all important to Mountain View. They enhance the city's neighborhoods and Downtown and offer recreation, social interaction and community-building activities and programs. Parks, open space and natural areas benefit human health and the environment through opportunities for physical exercise and access to nature for people, and habitats for plants and animals.

Mountain View is committed to continuing these services and benefits. This Element directs development and maintenance of an exceptional system of high-quality parks, open space, community facilities, programs and support services. The City's 2008 Parks and Open Space Plan (POSP) provides detailed, shorter-term actions that carry out this Element's long-range goals and policies. Both the POSP and the City's 2008 Recreation Plan will be updated periodically to be consistent with the General Plan.

The Element begins with a Context section, followed by a Looking Forward section (page 148) that highlights opportunities, challenges and key strategies. The final section outlines the specific goals and policies (page 149) for each topic area.

## Context

Mountain View has nearly 1,000 acres of parks and open space. Mountain View also enjoys an interconnected system of trails, community facilities owned by the City and shared with other organizations, and a variety of recreational and arts programs and services. This Context section defines performance standards for parks, broadly describes existing parks, facilities, programs and other resources and highlights some opportunities for improvement.

The Context section is organized according to these topics:

- Parks and Open Space (page 142)
- Trails (page 145)
- Community Facilities (page 146)
- Programs and Services (page 146)
- Arts (page 146)
- Trees, Gardens and Landscaping (page 147)

### **Parks and Open Space**

Mountain View is home to two large regional open spaces, Shoreline at Mountain View Regional Park and Stevens Creek Trail. They account for about 80% of the City's total parks and open space acreage. Other parks in the city offer recreational amenities including play structures, aquatics, tennis facilities, athletic fields and picnic areas (Figure 6.1).

#### ***Park Performance Standards***

Well-designed park systems incorporate a variety of park types and supply open space within convenient walking distance of neighborhoods. Cities generally adopt park performance standards to direct their development and management. A classification system defines park types by their size, function and ideal service area (Table 6.1). Park types help the City assess the distribution of activities, ensuring a balanced mix of active and passive uses and other distinct recreational opportunities. Identifying a target service area helps planning for parks that are accessible to residents.

#### ***Mountain View's Park Acreage, Distribution and Accessibility***

Mountain View's Parks and Open Space Plan identifies a range of park types and uses residential characteristics, size, type and location of existing parks to determine where additional park

capacity could most benefit the community. The POSP also pinpoints locations where improved pedestrian and bicycle crossings are needed to ensure safe access.

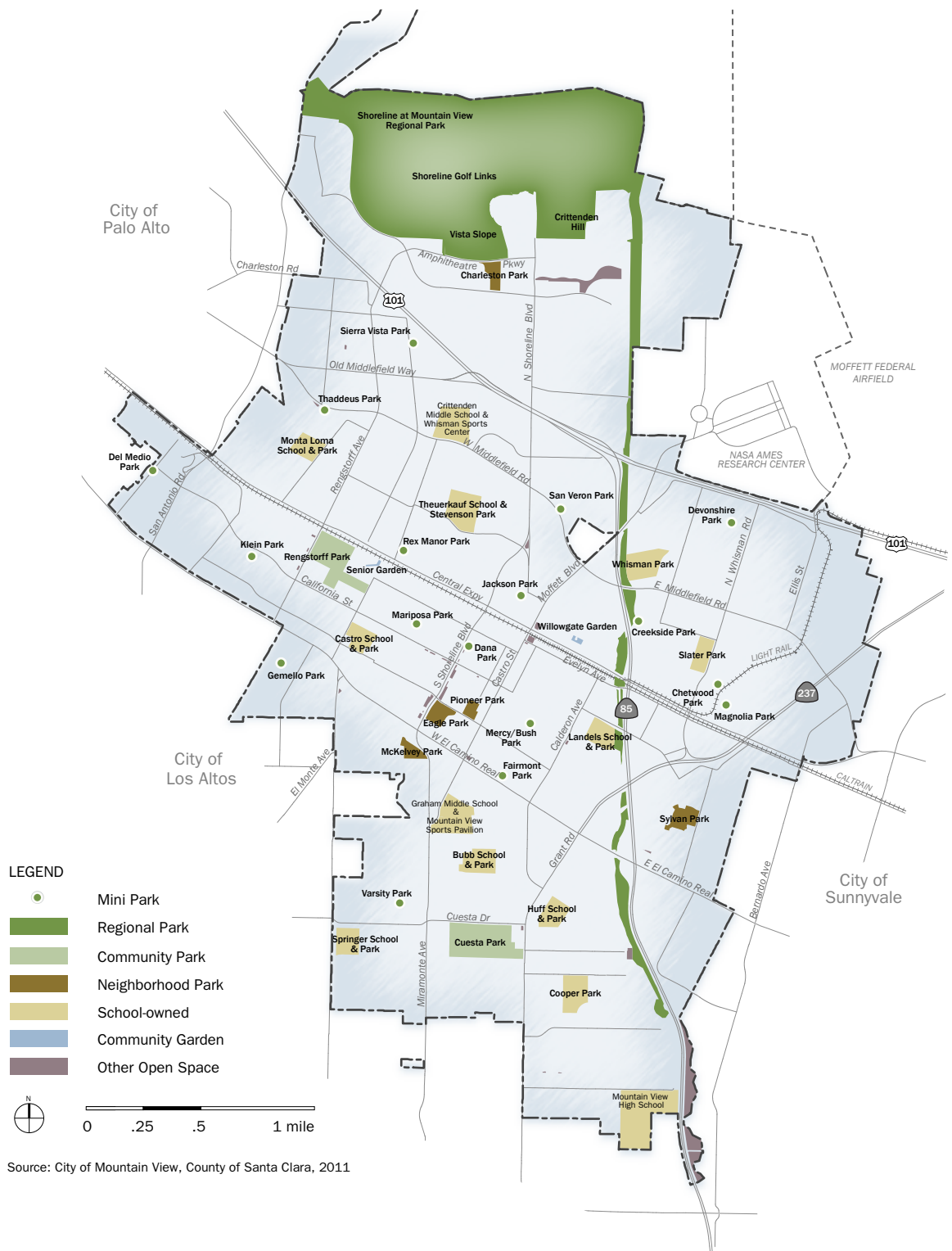
Mountain View has four general park types: regional parks/open space, community parks, neighborhood parks and mini parks (Table 6.2).

The City's standard specifies at least three acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. In 2010, Mountain View's 972 acres of parkland exceeded this standard, with about 13.5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. The City's Shoreline at Mountain View Regional Park and the Stevens Creek Trail contribute many acres to the City's parkland resources. Without them, Mountain View has 187 acres of parkland, or 2.6 acres per 1,000 residents.

One of the City's long-standing goals is to equitably distribute open space throughout the community, so that all residents will be within safe and comfortable walking distance of a park. Improved accessibility to parks makes it more convenient for the community to play, exercise, feel a connection to nature and share open space and facilities with others. As community gathering places, local parks also help residents identify more strongly with their neighborhoods. Increasing the number of community, neighborhood and smaller local mini parks is an important strategy in achieving this goal of offering Mountain View residents an accessible and well-balanced range of park facilities.

As of 2010, the POSP's highest near-term priorities included developing a community park between Central Expressway and Highway 101, and

Figure 6.1: Parks, 2010



**Table 6.1 Park Types**

Type of Park or Facility	Service Area	Size
Mini Park	1/2-mile	0-3 acres
Neighborhood Park	1 mile	3-15 acres
Community Park and/or Recreational Facility	Entire City	15-50 acres (not including recreational facilities and parking lots)
Regional Park	Entire Region	50+ acres

**Table 6.2 City Parks, 2012**

Park Type	Number of Parks	Open Space Acres	Percentage of Total Acreage
Mini Parks	17	12.0	1.2%
Neighborhood Parks–City-Owned	5	47.8	4.9%
Neighborhood Parks–School District-Owned	13	84.8	8.7%
Community Parks	2	50.1	5.1%
Regional Parks and Open Space (including Stevens Creek Trail)	1	777.5	80.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>972.2</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

establishing additional neighborhood parks and mini parks in the San Antonio, Sylvan-Dale, Rengstorff, Stierlin, Thompson and Whisman POSP Planning Areas. These priorities will evolve with updates to the POSP and will be adjusted as new facilities are developed. The POSP includes a regularly updated list of parks with their acreage and facilities.

#### **Parkland Dedication Ordinance**

Mountain View's Parkland Dedication Ordinance requires residential development projects to dedicate parkland to serve new population growth. It is not feasible for many smaller residential

projects to dedicate land, so the City collects an equivalent or "in-lieu" fee. This fee is a major source of funding for acquiring and developing parks. The City monitors where parks are needed and uses in-lieu fees and other funding sources to buy land as opportunities arise.

#### **School District Lands**

Many residents rely on nearby schools to provide neighborhood recreational resources. Joint-use agreements between the City and Mountain View Whisman School District allow for shared public access to school grounds and facilities. The school district owns



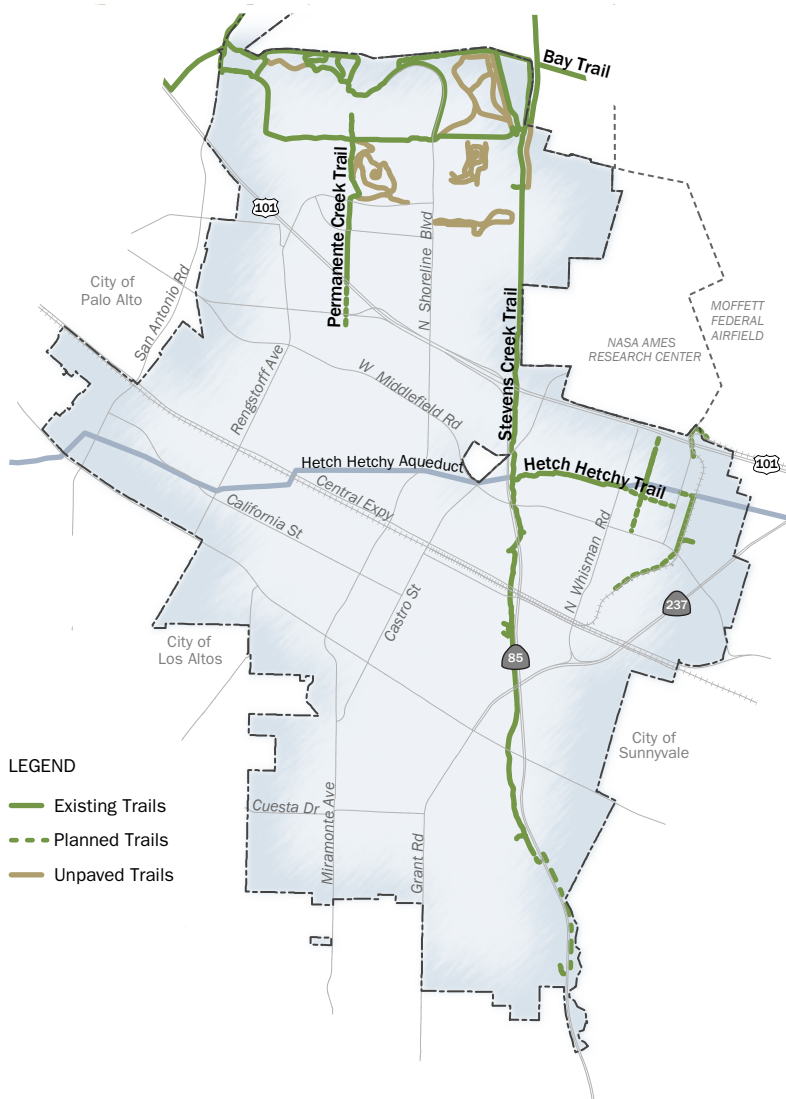
about two-thirds of Mountain View's neighborhood park acreage, 85 out of 133 acres. These school sites, typically five acres or more, provide most of the city's facilities for sports such as baseball, softball and soccer. Mountain View's long-standing policy supporting cooperative agreements with the school district allows joint use of 12 school park sites for recreation outside of school hours. These sites include all active and inactive school sites in the district in addition to one school in the Los Altos School District. In exchange, the City maintains the parks and open space at Mountain View Whisman School District sites. The City and the district have also cooperated to build two athletic complexes that serve the entire community.

### Trails

The City's multi-use trails connect neighborhoods and parks throughout the community and help make walking and bicycling attractive alternatives to driving. In recent years, Mountain View has made significant progress in extending several trails across the city. Most of the Stevens Creek Trail, the portion that stretches from Shoreline to south of El Camino Real, is complete. Parts of the Permanente Creek Trail, the Light Rail Trail and the Hetch Hetchy Trail are also complete or are in advanced planning stages (Figure 6.2).



Figure 6.2: Trails



in the two community parks. Shoreline at Mountain View Regional Park has a golf course and the historic Rengstorff House. In addition, the City operates Deer Hollow Farm, a historical working farm and educational center at a Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District preserve outside the city limits.

### Programs and Services

Mountain View offers a wide range of recreation, library and educational programs for all ages. These include classes, sports leagues, teen and senior programming, special events, teen drop-in at the Library and many other activities. The City's programming is continually evolving to respond to changing demographic and social needs. Some of the new areas of interest are environmental education, health and wellness, after-school programs, parenting workshops and other programs identified in the City's Recreation Plan and Youth Action Plan. New youth sports and the growth of adult sports leagues have increased the demand for more playing fields. Child care is also an important growing need in the community. The City operates the Child Care Center at Rengstorff Park, but also supports high-quality and affordable child-care services and facilities throughout the city. Mountain View will require creative solutions for delivering programs and services to meet the changing needs of the community.

### Arts

Art and cultural programs offer civic interaction, education and enrichment. Mountain View's Center for the Performing Arts is a year-round venue for theater, dance and musical programs. Programs expand beyond

### Community Facilities

Mountain View's community facilities draw residents together for social, recreational, educational and enrichment purposes. Major community facilities include the Library, Mountain View Center for Performing Arts, Senior Center, Child Care Center, Community Center, two swimming pools and a tennis complex. These facilities are in the Downtown Civic Center area and



the Center itself with performances in nearby parks. The City also actively supports visual arts through programs that include requiring public art in new public projects.

### **Trees, Gardens and Landscaping**

Trees, gardens and landscaping provide aesthetic, environmental and health benefits. Trees produce oxygen, improve air quality, remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere and provide shade and cooling. Trees and landscaped areas also help reduce stormwater runoff and supply habitat for birds, insects and animals. Fruit trees and vegetable gardens reflect Mountain View's agricultural past and can offer healthy local food as well as a source of physical activity for gardeners.

The City maintains a comprehensive inventory of street and park trees and manages their maintenance, replacement and expansion. Mountain View's Heritage Tree Ordinance ensures that trees are protected or replaced when removal is unavoidable. The City also sponsors two community gardens—the Senior Garden and the Willowgate Community Garden. Use of drought-tolerant and salt-tolerant plants, many of which are natives, minimizes the amount of water needed for public and private landscaping in Mountain View.



## Looking Forward

Following are some distinct opportunities and challenges the City of Mountain View is likely to face over the life of the General Plan, and key strategies for addressing them. These strategies should be top priorities to advance the Parks, Open Space and Community Facilities Element goals and policies which are described in the next section, and to inform decision making over the life of the General Plan.

*More park space with population growth.* As more housing is built, the City needs to add park acreage within residential areas to serve the increased population. The General Plan includes policies for expanding parks and open space, purchasing additional private land for parks, and using easements, leases, cooperative agreements and grants from other agencies to increase park acreage.

*A balanced distribution of parks.* As a long-term goal, the City aims to provide an equitable distribution of parks and recreational opportunities within comfortable walking distance of homes. The General Plan supports POSP recommendations to provide a new community park and additional neighborhood and mini parks in several underserved areas.

*Removal of barriers to bike and pedestrian access.* In addition to a balanced distribution of parks throughout the city, the General Plan includes policies for better bicycle and pedestrian access to parks, especially across barriers such as busy streets. Access across Highway 101 to the Bay and Shoreline Park is a particular challenge, addressed in part by building the Permanente Creek Bicycle/Pedestrian Overcrossing over Highway 101.

*Continued collaboration with school districts.* The City is working toward a system of parks that equitably spans residential neighborhoods. In the meantime, existing resources owned by school districts provide excellent potential to fill residents' needs for convenient access to parks and community facilities. A key General Plan strategy involves continued collaboration with the Mountain View Whisman School District and the Mountain View-Los Altos Union High School District to explore mutual interests and joint-use agreements that could help meet City park and open space needs.

*Expansion of the trail network.* Continued expansion of the City's trail system is a top priority, including completion of several trails and links through entry points, pathways and bridges.

*Healthy and sustainable landscaping.* Mountain View values healthy and sustainable landscaping. The General Plan continues this emphasis on maintaining and improving trees, plants and landscaping throughout the city. This includes caring for street trees, protecting heritage trees, improving and planting new public landscaping and community gardens and requiring private landscaping improvements with new development.

## Goals and Policies

Parks, open space and community facilities (POS) goals are broad statements describing the City's future direction. Policies are more specific direction for achieving each goal. Actions for putting these goals and policies into effect are detailed separately in the General Plan's Action Plan.

### Parks and Open Space

Parks and open space policies outline means of acquisition, distribution, design and protection of parks, open space and park facilities.

**Goal POS-1:** *An expanded and enhanced park and open space system.*

#### Policies

**POS 1.1: Additional parkland.** Expand park and open space resources to meet current City standards for open space acreage and population in each neighborhood.

**POS 1.2: Recreation facilities in new residential developments.** Require new development to provide park and recreation facilities.

**Goal POS-2:** *Parks and public facilities equitably distributed throughout the community and accessible to residents and employees.*

**POS 2.1: Distribution of parks.** Give priority for park acquisition to the Planning Areas identified in the Parks and Open Space Plan.

**POS 2.2: Connectivity and transit access.** Improve connectivity and transit accessibility to parks.

**POS 2.3: Pedestrian and bicycle access.** Improve pedestrian and bicycle access to parks, and create new connections to parks to minimize pedestrian and bicycle travel distances.

**POS 2.4: Access to Bay and natural areas.** Promote safe access to San Francisco Bay, creeks, scenic features and other natural resources in the city and surrounding region.

**POS 2.5: Schools.** Pursue strategies for preserving its park and open space areas if a school site is declared surplus by the school district.

**POS 2.6: Diverse park amenities.** Design parks to address a range of activities for diverse populations.

**Goal POS-3:** *Open space areas with natural characteristics that are protected and sustained.*

#### Policy

**POS 3.1: Preservation of natural areas.** Preserve natural areas, creeks and Shoreline at Mountain View Regional Park primarily for low-intensity uses. In special circumstances more active uses may be permitted if the overall natural character of the larger area is retained.

**Goal POS-4:** *Parks and public facilities that are well designed and integrated with the surrounding neighborhood.*

**Policies**

**POS 4.1: Community involvement.** Involve and empower the community in planning and carrying out open space programs.

**POS 4.2: Park design.** Implement high-quality park amenities and design.

**Goal POS-5:** *Cooperation between the City and local school districts to meet shared open space, recreation and education needs.*

**Policies**

**POS 5.1: Cooperation with school districts.** Continue cooperative arrangements with school districts to use open space and facilities at schools for public parks, playgrounds and recreation programs and establish new arrangements.

**POS 5.2: Schools and open space.** Collaborate with the school district on new school development and intensification to accommodate population growth while preserving and protecting public parks and playgrounds.

**POS 5.3: School facilities.** Ensure school facilities are constructed to serve community needs to the extent allowed by state law.

**POS 5.4: School facility needs.** Collaborate with local school districts on their facility needs and provide information on development and growth trends.

**Trails**

Trails policies encourage recreation, improve health and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by providing active transportation links to neighborhoods, parks, transit and other destinations throughout Mountain View.

**Goal POS-6:** *An integrated system of multi-use trails connecting to key local and regional destinations and amenities.*

**Policies**

**POS 6.1: Citywide network of pathways.** Develop a citywide network of pedestrian and bicycle pathways to connect neighborhoods, employment centers, open space resources and major destinations within the city.

**POS 6.2: At-grade crossings.** Minimize at-grade crossings of major roads when building new trails.

**Programs and Services**

Policies for programs and services promote an exceptional quality of life for diverse residents through classes, cultural events, venues for social gatherings, sports leagues, the Library, special events, child care and other programs and services.

**Goal POS-7:** *A broad range of recreational and cultural programs and services that meet diverse community needs.*

**Policies**

**POS 7.1: Diverse needs.** Ensure that programs and services meet the diverse needs in the community for users such as seniors, youth, non-English speaking groups and special-needs groups.

**POS 7.2: Programming partnerships.** Strengthen partnerships and outreach with the nonprofit, public and private sectors to enhance recreational and educational programming.

**POS 7.3: Balanced individual and organized sports use.** Balance programming for individual users and organized sports uses.

**POS 7.4: Culture and history.** Use parks and recreation facilities to improve awareness and understanding of Mountain View's culture, links to its past and relationships with Sister Cities.

**POS 7.5: Library services.** Provide high-quality library services and resources that address community needs and goals.

**POS 7.6: Volunteerism.** Enhance city volunteerism and education programs.

**Goal POS-8:** *Safe, high-quality and affordable child-care services and facilities for residents and workers.*

**Policy**

**POS 8.1: Child care.** Facilitate and encourage new child-care facilities and operators in the city.

**Community Facilities**

Community facilities policies focus on community centers, fire stations, City offices and other facilities. Facilities should be welcoming to all residents, serve as important community amenities, protect public safety and meet high standards for sustainability.

**Goal POS-9:** *High-quality, accessible, flexible, well-maintained and environmentally sustainable public facilities.*

**Policies**

**POS 9.1: Sustainable design.** Promote sustainable building materials, energy-efficient and water-efficient designs, permeable paving and other low-impact features in new public buildings.

**POS 9.2: Changing needs.** Design new facilities with the flexibility to accommodate changing community needs.

**POS 9.3: Maintenance.** Provide adequate maintenance and upgrades for all City facilities.

**POS 9.4: Americans with Disability Act accessibility.** Implement accessibility improvements at public facilities as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Uniform Building Code.

## **Arts**

Arts policies are intended to contribute to residents' lifelong education and enjoyment by supporting performing arts programming, particularly centered around the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts. They are also intended to continue a vibrant public art program.

**Goal POS-10:** *A thriving performing arts community through programming, services and facilities.*

### **Policy**

**POS 10.1: Performing arts space.** Ensure that performers and artists have a variety of performance spaces and venues.

**Goal POS-11:** *A commitment to the visual arts that contributes to a lasting cultural legacy for the community.*

### **Policy**

**POS 11.1: Diverse and accessible visual arts.** Encourage visual arts that celebrate the diversity and aspirations of the city and are accessible to the entire community.

## **Trees, Gardens and Landscaping**

Policies for trees, gardens and landscaping are intended to beautify the city, to increase residents' access to nature, to promote environmental sustainability through comprehensive tree and landscaping programs, and to promote physical activity, health and environmental sustainability through community gardening and edible landscaping.

**Goal POS-12:** *A healthy urban forest and sustainable landscaping throughout the city.*

### **Policies**

**POS 12.1: Heritage trees.** Protect trees as an ecological and biological resource.

**POS 12.2: Urban tree canopy.** Increase tree canopy coverage to expand shaded areas, enhance aesthetics and help reduce greenhouse gases.

**POS 12.3: Planter strip.** Require tree planter strips to be wide enough to support healthy trees and well-maintained public infrastructure.

**POS 12.4: Drought-tolerant landscaping.** Increase water-efficient, drought-tolerant and native landscaping where appropriate on public and private property.

**POS 12.5: Salt-tolerant vegetation.** Promote the use of salt-tolerant vegetation that can use recycled water.

**Goal POS-13:** *Edible landscaping that provides food for people, foraging opportunities for wildlife and community gardens for the health and enjoyment of the community.*

**Policies**

**POS 13.1: Community gardens.** Encourage urban agriculture and community gardens.

**POS 13.2: Gardens at schools.** Collaborate with school districts to create edible gardens and landscaping on school property.

**POS 13.3: Edible landscaping.** Encourage edible landscaping plans for public and private developments.



